

Introduction

Chapter 1

WHY PLAN?

Cities plan for the same reason all prudent organizations do -- to ensure their future viability. A master plan is a tool that allows a city to anticipate changes and to guide those changes in a cost-effective, orderly manner that is consistent with the desires of the community. Areas deemed desirable for future growth can be determined. Inefficient and haphazard development can be avoided. Established neighborhoods and sensitive natural features can be protected from over development.

A well thought-out master plan analyzes future trends and directs growth to areas where it is most suitable. It places incompatible land uses far away from each other, preventing future conflicts. It anticipates additional demands placed on public infrastructure by growth, eliminating overburdened infrastructure. Conversely, a master plan can also contain strategies for dealing with and/or reversing population and economic declines.

Master plans can be used as tools for properly managing and directing growth. Master plans lend predictability to developers by showing them the types of development desired where it would best be placed, and where future infrastructure will be built. Master plans give zoning and subdivision ordinances a sound legal basis, eliminating arbitrary, or capricious enforcement of zoning or subdivision ordinances.

A master plan developed by the citizens can serve as a community consensus regarding the long-range vision of the city that its citizens desire. This is perhaps the most important reason of all to plan. In face of constant change, a master plan allows the people of a city to determine a vision of what the community wants to be and how it wants to look in the future. The master plan puts the fate of the city in the hands of the citizens and gives them the right to decide their own future. In essence, a master plan is choice instead of chance.

PREVIOUS MASTER PLANS FOR SAN MARCOS

1970 Master Plan

In 1968, the City of San Marcos hired the consulting firm Lockwood, Andrews & Newnam, Inc. to prepare a U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development 701 plan. The 701 plan was a prerequisite for any city seeking HUD funding. Many cities viewed the 701 plan simply as another step in the federal grant-funding application process and shelved this plan shortly after completion. The plan prepared for the City of San Marcos in 1970 was very general in nature, but several recommendations regarding amendments to the city's zoning and subdivision ordinances were implemented.

1983 Master Plan

In 1981, San Marcos found itself facing rapid growth. Between 1970 and 1980 the land area had increased by 67% and the population had increased by 25%. The city decided to update the 1970 plan and hired the consulting firm Freese and Nichols, Inc. The planning process lasted for 18 months with the active involvement of 200 citizens. On May 9, 1983, the San Marcos City Council adopted the new master plan by ordinance and began implementation of the recommendations. The Future Land Use Plan in the document still serves the city today, and deviations from the plan require formal council action. In 1984, the plan received a merit award from the Texas Chapter of the American Planning Association.

Growth and Changes in San Marcos

Since the adoption of the 1983 master plan, the city has undergone many changes. San Marcos has experienced the construction of several new manufacturing facilities, substantial expansion of Southwest Texas State University, construction of the San Marcos Factory Shops and the Tanger Factory Outlet Center, new issues concerning the Edwards Aquifer, a real estate boom and bust, a severe housing shortage, the designation of San Marcos as a Community

Development Block Grant (CBDG) entitlement and a Main Street Project city, changes in national, state, regional, and local policies, and changes in the economy. The 1983 master plan served the community well during most of this period, but San Marcos is facing new challenges as the community continues to grow and change beyond the geographic limits of the plan; clearly, a new master plan is needed. In late 1993, a five-member steering committee was formed to guide and oversee the development of a new master plan for the city. The new master plan, titled San Marcos Horizons, is described in the following section.

City Charter Requirements for a Master Plan

Article VII, Section 7.06 of the Home Rule Charter of the City of San Marcos states the following regarding the master plan:

The master plan for the physical development of the City of San Marcos shall contain the recommendations of the Planning and Zoning Commission for growth, development and beautification of the city. The council may amend the master plan after at least one (1) public hearing on the proposed action. The council shall not act on any amendment affecting the master plan unless and until a recommendation on said amendment is received from the Planning and Zoning Commission.

Article VII, Section 7.05 of the Home Rule Charter of the City of San Marcos states the following regarding the powers and duties of the Planning and Zoning Commission:

The commission shall have the power and be required to... [p]erform an ongoing review of the master plan, with each element of the plan being reviewed at least once each three (3) years; conduct an annual public hearing in connection with this review; and submit not less than one hundred twenty (120) days prior to the beginning of the fiscal year, a list of recommended changes, if any, in the master plan.

SAN MARCOS HORIZONS

Introduction to San Marcos Horizons

San Marcos Horizons is the City of San Marcos' master plan and is intended to guide the growth of the city over the next decade. It is a plan that is based on the community's vision of what San Marcos can become and how it wants to look in the future. This community vision is the starting point for an action plan that outlines policy recommendations for the growth and physical development of the community. It states the city's goals regarding future land uses and establishes coordination with related infrastructure master plans. San Marcos Horizons provides the basis for the development of programs and services that have an impact on the physical development of the city, and provides direction regarding coordination with other public and private entities on the implementation of its stated goals. The San Marcos Horizons jurisdiction includes the City of San Marcos and its two-mile Extra-Territorial Jurisdiction (ETJ). The City of San Marcos Jurisdiction map is presented on the following page.

Overview of Plan Contents

San Marcos Horizons contains four principal chapters: San Marcos Today, San Marcos Trends, San Marcos Tomorrow, and San Marcos Action Plan. **San Marcos Today** is a profile of existing conditions in the community. This chapter includes factual information on the history of San Marcos, the regional setting, the natural environment, the built environment, the people of San Marcos, the economy of San Marcos, and existing community facilities. San Marcos Today describes the present foundation upon which the future community will be built.

San Marcos Trends describes the national, state, regional, and local trends impacting the physical, economical, and social development of San Marcos. This chapter includes information on population, demographics, economic, construction, and utility trends. This chapter describes

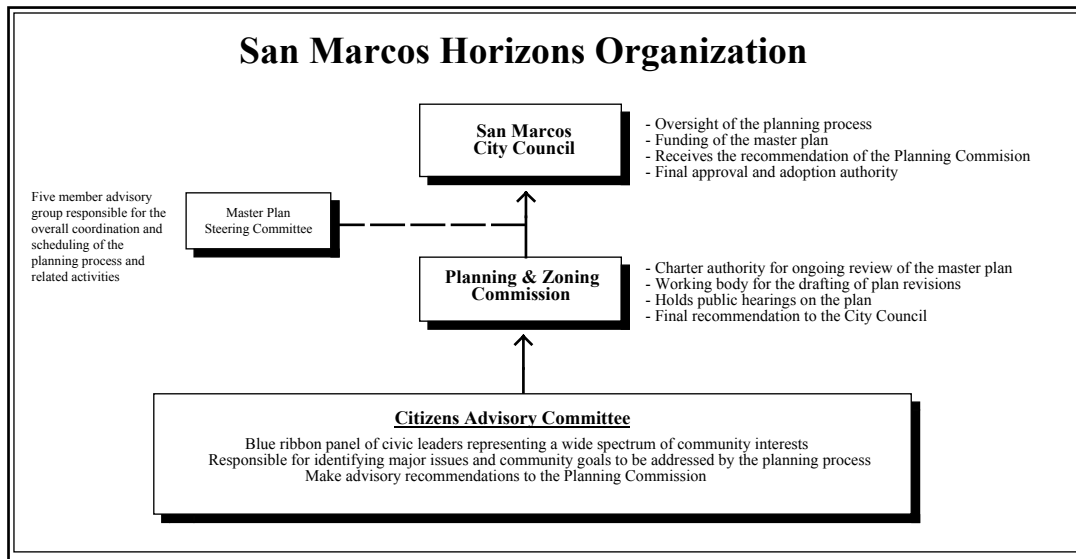
the forces, both within and outside the community, that are influencing the growth of San Marcos.

San Marcos Tomorrow is the community's vision for the future physical development of the city. This chapter includes the future major thoroughfare, land use, annexation, community facilities, and downtown plans. Each of the individual master plan elements includes future policies for the city. This chapter establishes a vision of the overall image of what the community wants to be and how it wants to look in the future.

San Marcos Action Plan includes a set of implementation actions that are necessary to achieve the community's vision. Implementation actions are included for each master plan element in San Marcos Tomorrow. This chapter provides specific actions and tasks to turn the vision into reality.

San Marcos Horizons Planning Process

In late 1993, the master planning process began with the formation of the San Marcos Horizons Plan Steering Committee. This five-member steering committee developed a general outline and time schedule for plan preparation. In addition, the steering committee solicited volunteers to serve on the Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC). The chart on the following page presents the organization of the San Marcos Horizons process. In February 1994, the City Council appointed 55 citizens to the CAC. The CAC included representatives from a wide spectrum of community interests and was charged with developing a vision for the future of San Marcos. The committee identified major issues and community goals to be addressed by the master planning process.



The CAC participated in a series of workshops scheduled throughout the spring and early summer of 1994. The first workshop included an exercise where the CAC determined the overall opportunities for and problems faced by San Marcos. The CAC was then divided into six focus groups: community growth and land use, community facilities, economic development, natural and cultural resources, town center, and transportation. Each focus group developed goals and objectives for issues specific to its focus. Lastly, the CAC developed a vision statement for San Marcos.

In the spring and summer of 1995, the CAC participated in another series of workshops. The goal of these workshops was to review and reach consensus as a committee on the draft version of San Marcos Horizons. Average attendance of the CAC during these workshops was 30 members. On July 31, 1995, the CAC voted to approve the draft version of San Marcos Horizons and forward the document to the Planning and Zoning Commission.

Upon completion of the committees' work, San Marcos Horizons was presented to the Planning and Zoning Commission. The Planning and Zoning Commission conducted four public hearings at various sites located throughout the city. After the public hearings, the Planning and Zoning Commission unanimously recommended approval of the plan on October 10, 1995.

Upon completion of the commissions work, San Marcos Horizons was presented to the City Council. During the fall of 1995, the Planning and Development Services Department staff conducted five summary presentations of the master plan to the City Council. On February 26, 1996, the City Council adopted San Marcos Horizons as the city's new Master Plan.

San Marcos Horizons Update Process

The updating process for San Marcos Horizons is intended to change the master planning process in San Marcos. In the past, San Marcos has completed a new master plan every 10 to 15 years. The San Marcos Horizons update process is designed to be an on-going planning process with continuous review and revisions. To keep the plan viable, it will be continuously monitored and revised. The scope and extent of the plan revisions will depend on the rate and trends of growth, the availability of new data, and other changes which affect the viability of the plan.

In addition, as new land is added to the city's extra-territorial jurisdiction, land use amendments will be prepared to expand the geographical scope of the Master Plan as the city grows.

RELATED SAN MARCOS MASTER PLANS

Airport Master Plan

The Airport Master Plan Update was completed in 1992 by the consulting firm of Charles Willis and Associates, Inc. The master plan analyzed several possible scenarios for airport development, given the airport's role as a FAA designated "reliever" facility for the Austin-San Antonio area. Recommendations included increasing the length of one or more of the runways to enhance the airport's status as a corporate jet facility and the construction or upgrade of facilities to increase the functionality of the airport. In addition, incompatible land uses adjacent to the airport were closely analyzed. Although most of the land near the airport is currently undeveloped, the prospect of continued development pressures around the airport poses potential land use compatibility problems.

Water Master Plan

The Water Master Plan, conducted by HDR Engineering, Inc., is in the process of being completed. A preliminary engineering report completed in May 1993 studied population and water-use projections for San Marcos and its extra-territorial jurisdiction and considered various options for ensuring an adequate supply of clean water for the city's long-term needs. The Water Master Plan, when finished, will contain recommendations to expand the water supply in San Marcos to meet the projected needs of the community until the year 2045 and decrease reliance on the Edwards Aquifer as the sole water supply source for the city.

Wastewater Master Plan

The consulting firm of Black & Veatch completed the Wastewater Master Plan in 1994. The plan determined the wastewater needs in the City of San Marcos and its extra-territorial jurisdiction until the year 2015. Based on current facilities and anticipated population growth, the plan made several recommendations, which include upgrading the existing wastewater

treatment plant capacity from its current permitted 6.25 million gallons per day (MGD) to 9 MGD, improvement of the quality of effluent released by the plant, and improvements to the collection system. The Wastewater Master Plan recommended \$28.4 million in wastewater system improvements over the next five years.

Drainage Master Plan

The Drainage Master Plan, completed in 1994 by the engineering firm Camp Dresser & McKee, examined the existing infrastructure and addressed deficiencies in storm sewer systems and roadway culverts in their ability to avert street flooding and property damage caused by floods. The plan also recommended over \$25 million in improvements to upgrade existing facilities to handle a ten-year flood, proposed upgrading drainage infrastructure requirements for new development to limit adverse impacts from increased runoff rates, and examined various funding alternatives to achieve its goals. Implementation has not begun as of September 1995, due to funding limitations.

Southwest Texas State University Master Plan

The Southwest Texas State University (SWT) Master Plan, completed in 1994, was a collaborative effort of several planning firms and university staff. The plan is intended to guide the university to the year 2005. The master plan has two main functions: to develop a strategy of growth management for handling anticipated increases in enrollment, faculty, and staff and to combine previously completed SWT studies -- the Utility Master Plan, the Landscape Master Plan, Transportation Study, and Campus Signage Master Plan. The 1994 Master Plan recommended construction of new buildings and remodeling of some existing buildings, suggested improvements in landscaping and traffic circulation, projected a 1.6% annual increase in student enrollment, and discussed additional land acquisition.

Citizens' Task Force for a Better San Marcos

The City Council appointed a Citizens' Task Force in 1993 to perform a "social audit" and make recommendations regarding the needs of the community. The task force reviewed the past ten years of the city's growth, assessed current conditions, and formulated goal statements for the future of San Marcos. Specific issues studied included health and social services, youth issues and crime prevention, education, transportation, economically depressed outlying communities, and economic development. Problems were discussed in each area and specific recommendations were formulated. The final recommendations were presented to the City Council in the fall of 1993 for implementation.